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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON "BILATERAL  
AGREEMENTS" BETWEEN RUSSIA AND ABKHAZIA

11. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the  
February 25, 2010, Permanent Council meeting in Vienna:

Begin text:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States strongly regrets the February 17 signing of so-called "bilateral agreements" between the Russian Federation and the Abkhazia region of Georgia. We are particularly concerned by an apparent agreement to allow the Russian Federation to build a military base in Gudauta. Furthermore, there are media reports of plans for further bases for Russian airborne troops and the Russian navy.

These actions clearly violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and contravene Russia's commitments under the August 12 cease-fire agreement. They also undermine principles and commitments agreed by OSCE participating States and enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter for European Security, and other OSCE documents.

The United States remain committed to a long-term, peaceful resolution to the conflict. We have repeatedly called on Russia to honor the terms of its cease-fire agreement with Georgia, and we once again urge Russia to withdraw its troops to positions held prior to the start of hostilities and to provide free access for humanitarian assistance to the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia. Russia's characterization of these regions as independent does not relieve it of these commitments.

We reiterate our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We also reiterate our firm belief that the OSCE and other international actors can play a valuable role in resolving ongoing problems and providing critical monitoring of human rights and humanitarian conditions, and we once more urge the re-establishment of an OSCE presence in Georgia, along with continued efforts to make concrete progress on issues of concern through the Geneva discussions and the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms. In this regard, we are particularly concerned that the South Ossetia IPRM has not been functioning for several months because of a boycott by the South Ossetian participants.

As we have said before, Mr. Chair, progress on the conflicts in Georgia would help build confidence, protect civilians, and represent a tangible contribution to improving European security. We sincerely hope to see positive steps forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

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